

OCCULTISM APPLIED TO DAILY LIFE

Living The Constructive Life

Serial No. 152

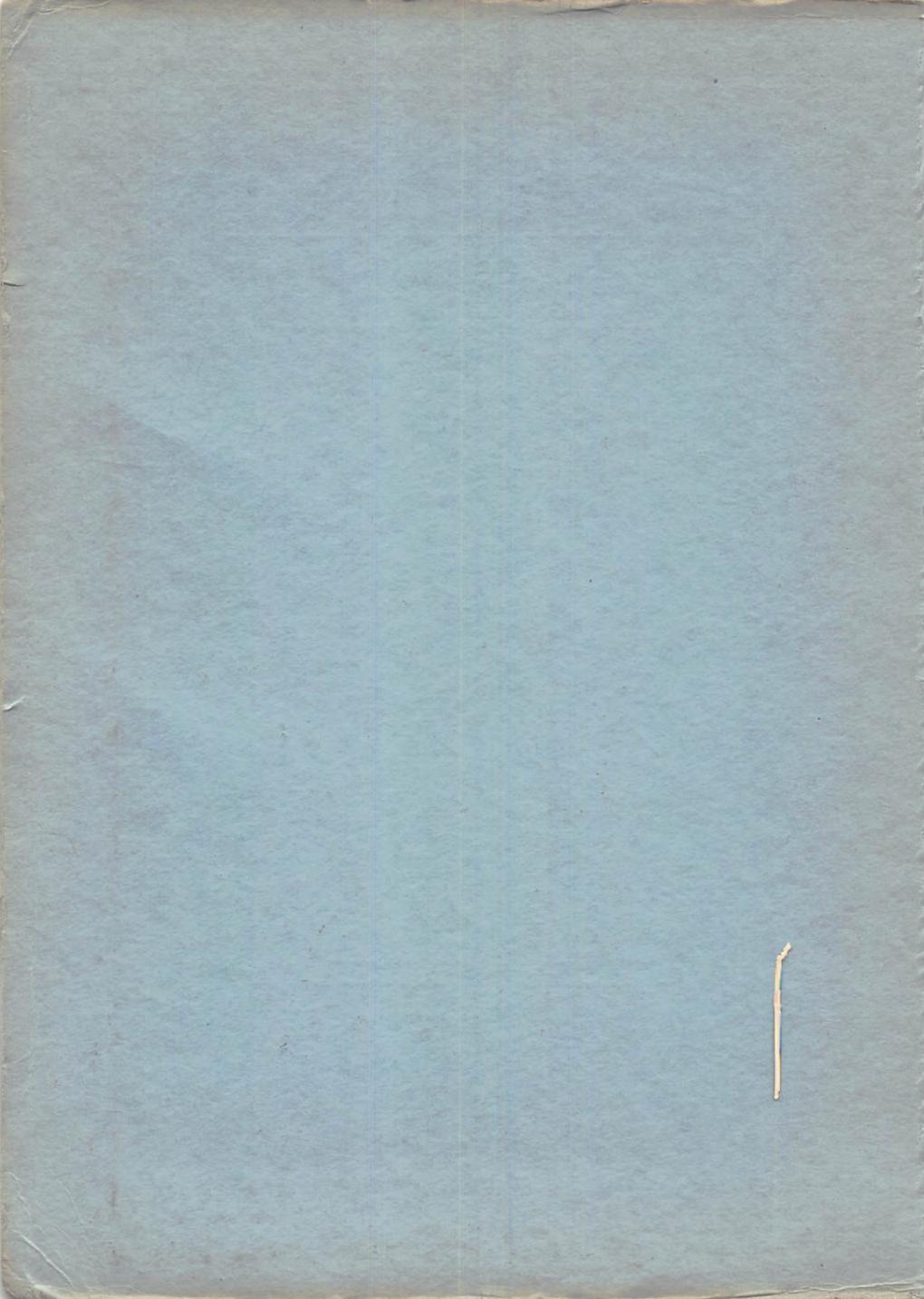
C. C. ZAIN

Course 14-B

SHERWOOD
CHRISTENSON

THE BROTHERHOOD OF LIGHT





clara E. Tiffman

LIVING THE COMPLETELY
CONSTRUCTIVE LIFE

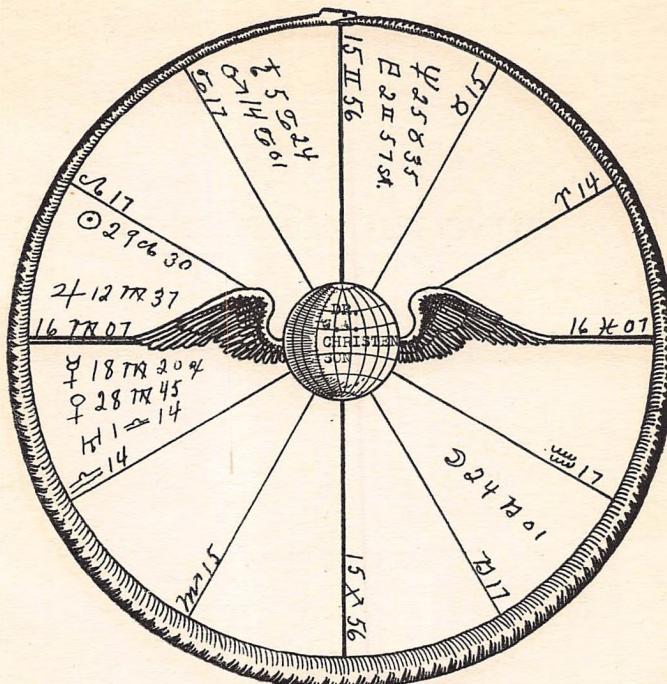
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by

ELBERT BENJAMINE

Serial No. 152

THE CHURCH OF LIGHT
Box 1525, Los Angeles, California



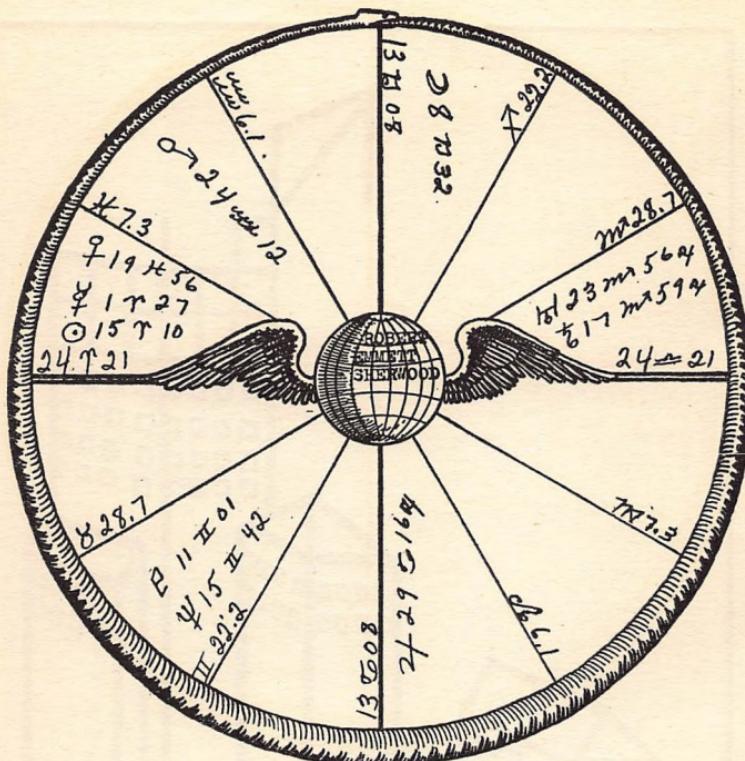
DR. W. A. CHRISTENSEN, August 22, 1885, 7:22 a.m. 81°45W.
24:30N. Data given by him personally.

1902, physical instructor: Sun conjunction Jupiter *p*.
1906, in San Francisco fire: Mars semi-square Jupiter *r*.
1907, married: Venus inconjunct Neptune *r*.
1914, total blindness followed vaccination: M.C. conjunction Mars *r*, Mars semi-square Asc. *r*.

1918, became interested in spiritual things: Sun conjunction Uranus *r*.

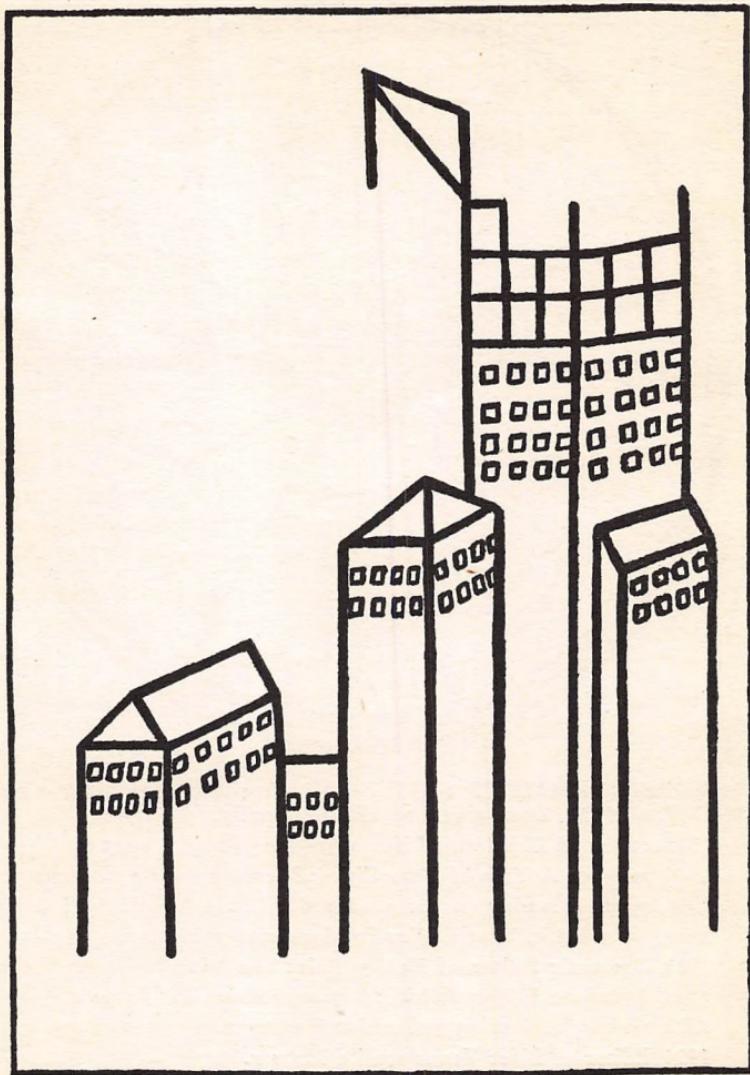
1929, got seeing eye dog: Mercury conjunction Uranus *p*.

1930, Sept. 8, seeing eye dog spectacularly rescued him from hotel fire; publicity enabled him to found National Eye Dog Association for benefit of blind: Venus sextile Jupiter *p*, Mercury square Saturn *r*.



ROBERT EMMETT SHERWOOD, April 4, 1896, 6:00 a.m.
73:47W. 40:55N. Data given by him personally.

- 1903, editor of Children's Life: Mars inconjunct Jupiter *r*.
- 1904, rewrote A Tale of Two Cities: Mercury sextile Neptune *p*.
- 1906, wrote first play (never produced): Sun semi-square Pluto *r*.
- 1918, wounded in World War I: Mars square Pluto *r*.
- 1919, Dramatic Editor of Vanity Fair: Sun trine Moon *r*.
- 1920, Associate Editor of Life: Venus semi-sextile Venus *r*.
- 1922, married: Mercury opposition Uranus *r*.
- 1924, Editor of Life: Venus sextile Mars *r*.
- 1927, wrote first of many successful plays: Sun semi-sextile Neptune *r*, Jupiter trine Mercury *r*.



LIVING THE COMPLETELY CONSTRUCTIVE LIFE



N this Course of lessons it is my intention to bring up as wide a variety as possible of those problems with which people are confronted in their daily lives, and indicate the manner in which occult knowledge and forces can be used to gain a satisfactory solution. I have started with the most important problem of all, that of finding one's true work in the cosmic scheme of things, including the selection of the best vocation. It is the most important problem at some time confronting every individual, because one cannot succeed in any worth while undertaking without having a proper objective toward which to work. With such an objective in view the next most important problem is how it may be reached. In this, because true success depends on co-operating with the Divine Plan rather than opposing or ignoring it, the most important step is the adoption of the completely constructive life. And the first step in this, and the most important step, is the conversion of all discordant thoughts and emotions into those harmonious.

Lest anyone should think, because earthly life is so short, that the selection of some line of activity by which one may contribute somewhat to universal

progress and welfare is of little consequence, it may be stated that such activity started here continues beyond the tomb. I do not mean that automobile mechanics will continue to repair automobiles, that the corner grocer will continue to dispense vegetables, or that the banker will loan money and collect interest for the stockholders of the bank. But I do mean that every constructive line of work, every occupation that satisfies a human need, trains those who follow it for a special work needing the exercise of the same faculties that may be taken up on the next plane after physical death.

When we find our work in universal society, that work is not confined to any one plane. We not only follow it here, but we follow a corresponding line of activity in still higher realms at the close of physical life. What we learn about our work while still on earth becomes an asset to us in the spirit world. In the work—our cosmic work which we have adopted because in it we can best serve both our own interests and the interests of cosmic progression—we do not remain stationary. We move forward, advancing step by step to greater knowledge and efficiency. As we master certain phases of it we progress to more complex activities. The successful grocer has developed qualities—particularly if his success is real in that he has rendered a public service through efficient distribution of produce at low cost—that fits him to distribute efficiently, not groceries but other things, in the life to come. The mechanic in the after life has no automobile to repair; but he does have ample opportunity to exercise all his mechanical skill and ingenu-

ity. The banker has neither money nor bank after he passes to lower astral planes; but there is still a cosmic need for his ability to conserve and furnish on short notice certain resources found on the plane where at the time he dwells.

The nature of the various things with which man works when he reaches the higher astral and spiritual planes of life can only be referred to by comparing them to the things of physical life. They are things, however, of a higher higher-velocity region, and cannot be visualized in lower-velocity terms; nor is there a vocabulary to describe them; for our vocabulary all refers to low-velocity life. All descriptions, therefore, of the surroundings of man on the spiritual plane and of his activities there, are necessarily extremely unsatisfactory. In so far as such descriptions are accurate they contain contradictory statements that render them rather confusing; for so many things that are impossible and contradictory at the low velocities of physical existence, where time and distance and gravitation as we know them are limiting factors, are possible and are facts in a region where velocities are sufficient that the laws of Relativity demand that time, and distance and gravitation as we know them disappear, and other properties take their place.

Thus through correspondence only, do most things of the spiritual plane resemble the things of the physical world. Yet our objective experiences, and the images, thoughts, and vocabulary arising therefrom, all pertain to the slow-moving physical world. We have no mental images with which, even to ourselves as yet, truly to picture conditions which exist on inner

planes; conditions which perhaps we are able to perceive with our psychic senses. The law of mental association, however, comes somewhat to our aid. What is perceived on the inner plane, through its correspondence, suggests something on the physical plane with which we are familiar. Instead, therefore, of the true image of what is transpiring on the spiritual plane which is actually perceived by the psychic senses if our psychic faculties are developed, when it is raised into the region of objective consciousness we see images and activities pertaining to the physical plane which the true image suggests.

That is, our perceptions of spiritual life, whether we get them clairvoyantly, through travel in other realms, or merely receive the reports of those who have died and passed to that plane, must all be translated from extremely high-velocity terminology into low-velocity terminology. Likewise, our perceptions of life on the astral plane, before we can be objectively conscious of them, must be translated from high-velocity terms to low-velocity terms. Consequently, it is futile to try to give a true picture of life in the spirit world. The very best we can hope to do, and this will necessarily include many contradictions because possibilities on one plane are often impossibilities on a lower plane, is to indicate those situations of physical life that most closely correspond to the conditions of spiritual existence.

This has been done in Course XX, THE NEXT LIFE. In that Course the principle is explained through which it is possible to tune in on the inner plane in full consciousness, what determines the inner-plane

level which is thus contacted or on which a soul more permanently resides, how movement across the inner-plane levels is accomplished, what determines the environment on a given level to which an individual moves, and the conditions to be encountered immediately after birth into the next life.

In that Course it is also explained how the strange properties that govern existence in the next life are consistent with Relativity, including the power of thought to build objects that seem as solid as concrete, and the influence of desire. Education, progress, domestic relations and social contacts are likewise considered, and the currency there used and the occupations followed. But these occupations, of course, are adapted to the laws and conditions of that realm.

I shall not attempt, therefore, to describe just what the work of a lawyer, a traveling salesman, or a farmer will be on the astral plane or on the spiritual plane. But in each case if the work is that for which the individual is best fitted he will find opportunity on higher planes to utilize his abilities and acquired knowledge in a line of effort corresponding to, and growing out of, the occupation he followed while on earth. The cosmic work, it will be seen, is not simply a line of effort during physical life, but a line of effort, utilizing the natural qualifications for cosmic welfare, that continues, one phase developing from another, into the vistas of life on successively higher planes after physical death.

Converting Discordant Thoughts and Emotions Into Those Harmonious.—Thoughts and emotions, as well as behavior and the events which enter our

lives, all belong to one of ten distinct types. They are stimulated into activity by conditions encountered in the external environment. But even so, they are chiefly the expression of the thought-cells within the finer form. These thought-cells whose organization constitutes the soul, or character, or unconscious mind, are of ten different types, each type mapped in the birth-chart by its corresponding planet. It is the activity of these thought-cells which, under stimulation received from environment, influences the trend of the thoughts and emotions. If these thought-cells are mapped by planets discordantly aspected, it indicates that they have been formed through unpleasant experiences of their type, and that they therefore work to express through discordant thinking and discordant behavior and unfortunate events of their type. On the other hand, if the thought-cells are mapped by planets harmoniously aspected, it indicates they have been formed by pleasant experiences of their type, and that they therefore work to express through harmonious thinking and harmonious behavior and fortunate events of their type.

But as has been proved through CASE HISTORY STUDIES of the lives of identical twins, natural twins and astrological twins, either the harmony or the discord that has been built into the thought-cells of any one of the ten types can be altered through training (conditioning). That is, one born with harmonious thought-cells of a given type can train them to feel discordantly, and to strive to express discordantly; and one born with discordant thought-cells of a given type can train them to feel harmonious

and to strive to express harmoniously. This process, whether carried on deliberately, or unconsciously through responses to experiences furnished by the environment, is called Reconditioning. And all persons are thus to some extent reconditioned after birth in reference not only to harmony and discord, but also in reference to the specific things their thought-cells work for.

The general characteristics of the thoughts which are the expression of the thought-cells mapped by a given planet cannot be changed. But it is not too difficult a task to train thoughts that habitually have expressed the destructive qualities of the thought-cells mapped by a given planet to express instead through that planet's constructive qualities. For example:

Sun thought-cells cannot be made to express inferiority, but instead of expressing through domination they can be trained to express through significance.

Moon thought-cells cannot be made to express aggression, but instead of expressing through mental instability they can be trained to express through domesticity.

Mercury thought-cells cannot be made to express blind belief, but instead of expressing through nervous disorders and restlessness they can be trained to express through intellectual activity.

Venus thought-cells cannot be made to express hatred, but instead of expressing through unrestrained emotion they can be trained to express through art or affection.

Mars thought-cells cannot be made to express cau-
tion, but instead of expressing through demolition

they can be trained to express through building something.

Jupiter thought-cells cannot be made to express discrimination, but instead of expressing through surfeit they can be trained to express through benevolence.

Saturn thought-cells cannot be made to express courage, but instead of expressing through fear they can be trained to express through systematization.

Uranus thought-cells cannot be made to express conservatism, but instead of expressing through agitation they can be trained to express through invention.

Neptune thought-cells cannot be made to express crystallization, but instead of expressing through fraud they can be trained to express through idealism.

Pluto thought-cells cannot be made to express isolation, but instead of expressing through coercion they can be trained to express through co-operation.

A New Habit Must Be Formed.—To carry out such training, a new habit must be formed of instantly noticing, at its inception, each disagreeable thought and feeling, and changing its direction so that its energy flows into channels that make it agreeable and pleasing. That is, new and permanent habits of thought and feeling are to be formed in which painful, disagreeable, and unpleasant states of consciousness have no place, but in their stead there are to be thoughts and moods of harmony, pleasure and joy. Such inward harmony is the most effective means of attracting pleasant and harmonious conditions in the environment, and thus conduces powerfully to all attainment.

New habits, however, are difficult to form, especially when their function is to displace others well entrenched. At best their adoption is rather slow, and requires both attention and work. But those such as we are now considering, because they make the life so much more happy and useful, are well worth the time, trouble and effort entailed.

The initial difficulty in forming a new habit is to remember at each proper time that a certain course of action has been determined upon. In the case at hand, in order to form the habit of changing discordant thoughts into harmonious thoughts, it becomes necessary instantly to remember every time an unpleasant thought or feeling commences that such thoughts are not to be entertained. It is all too easy to resolve not to permit thoughts of a certain type to enter the mind, and then when they appear to forget, in the mental and emotional activity they occasion, that they are forbidden.

To overcome this difficulty application may advantageously be made of an occult law, the law of suggestion (lesson No. 62). In this case the suggestion may best be applied in the form of an affirmation (lesson No. 63). To be effective the affirmation should be repeated several times on each occasion, and there should be several occasions each day. Then comes the problem of not forgetting to repeat the affirmation. This is best solved through application of the law of association (lesson No. 58), tying the act of repeating the affirmation to some other action that has already become habitual. Such a habitual act is that of eating. Therefore, if the practice is

adopted of repeating the affirmation several times before partaking of food, after a time, such is the force of habit, one will feel uncomfortable to partake of food before repeating the affirmation.

The affirmation, however, should do more than merely jog the memory whenever discordant thoughts enter the mind. It should also direct the attention of the unconscious mind to just what is to be accomplished. The powers of the unconscious mind are vastly superior to those of the objective mind, and they should be enlisted thoroughly in behalf of the new harmonious habits of life. Thus the affirmation should set forth in a clear cut manner the complete process. The following affirmation, I believe, fills these requirements: I AM ALERT TO OBSERVE THE APPROACH OF THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND EMOTIONS THAT ARE DISAGREEABLE: AND IN THEIR STEAD I ENTERTAIN ONLY PLEASANT THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND EMOTIONS.

By repeating this affirmation several times before each meal, the attention of the unconscious mind is directed in an effective manner to what is expected of it. And as the idea embodied in the affirmation grows in power through daily repetition of the suggestion, it will gradually transpire that every time a disagreeable thought, feeling, or emotion commences, immediate notice of it will be taken, and one will be fully aware it is an important matter that it should be changed into a more pleasant channel.

Unpleasant thoughts, feelings and emotions cannot be changed into those pleasant by merely willing to

change them. If they are to be changed, and each can be diverted into a harmonious channel, certain fundamental psychological laws must be observed.

Some things it is better not to think about at all. Other things are legitimate subjects of thought, but because of their real or fancied importance they occupy the mind too persistently. We think the same thing over and over without making any substantial progress. This we call worry. Worry, like other disagreeable thinking, not only creates discord in the astral body that tends to attract misfortune, but by wasting energy and destroying confidence works to defeat its own end. It is better, also, when the duties of life do not demand contact with such things, not to think about anything that gives rise to fear, hate, rage, disappointment, grief, sorrow, anxiety, or any other disagreeable emotion.

But it is not enough merely to will to stop thinking about a given situation or event. The laws of psychology demand that in order to stop thinking about one thing toward which the interest is attracted, that the attention must be diverted to some other thing that has about it an interest, spontaneous or acquired, that is equally intense.

Two or more thoughts or images cannot occupy a large part of the attention at the same time. The more fully engrossed the mind is with one set of thoughts the less room is there for any other set. The easiest way to stop thinking about one thing is to commence thinking about something else.

But unless the something else, artificially or spontaneously, can attract as much energy as the first

thing thought about, the attention soon is drawn back to the first subject. Therefore, when first made aware that disagreeable thoughts, feelings and emotions are beginning to be entertained, the best plan, when it is not absolutely imperative that they be given attention, is immediately to begin to think about something else.

This something else, under these circumstances, should always be something intensely interesting and something pleasant. For this purpose it is well to think out in advance for use when the occasion arises several of the most interesting and pleasant experiences of life and several of the most interesting topics of thought. Then, when unpleasant mental states start to invade the thoughts these may be used as shock troops to rout the invaders. Those thoughts having the most energy will retain the mental field. Therefore, that they may have abundant energy, those chosen for routing purposes should be about the most pleasant and most interesting subjects imaginable.

This plan of action is not only effective where feelings of fear, grief, anger, disappointment and self-pity are concerned, but may be used advantageously against worry and against malicious or annoying thoughts sent to one from another.

The latter subject has been discussed in detail in lesson No. 101. But it may be well here also to point out that this same method by which one may shut out disagreeable thoughts, feelings and emotions, may be used to shut out mental influences directed toward one by another. The thoughts of another will only enter

and affect the astral form when there is some measure of rapport with the other person. By thinking about a person, or thinking about an unseen influence, we tend to tune in on the vibrations of that person or influence. Psychic energies, either from discarnate, incarnate, elemental or other sources, are contacted through rapport with them. But if we resolutely maintain another rate of vibration by thinking intently about something entirely different, psychic entities, malign magnetism, pernicious thoughts of others, or any one of the other invisible conditions by which people are sometimes afflicted, are unable to tune in on this vibration, and as a consequence are unable to exert an influence upon us.

When investigating spiritualism and other psychic phenomena, if we do much research we are sure to come in contact with cases of obsession. Black magic and obsession are pet subjects of conversation in many occult circles. But neither black magic nor obsessive influences are effective against any person who learns to direct his thoughts (lesson No. 58), or who persistently applies the method of directing the attention given above. After all, thoughts are quite as obsessive as unseen entities. Of those in the insane asylums many, undoubtedly, are obsessed by unseen entities. But probably a greater number are obsessed not by another entity, but by their own ideas.

Obsessive Thoughts.—Of the two more common forms of insanity, dementia-praecox and paranoia, the latter is a condition in which undue importance is given to certain ideas, so that the thoughts no longer coincide with real conditions, but are warped from

the normal. Thus we have megalomania in which the person so intensely desires to be important and do great things that he comes to believe that all he does is very wonderful, and so strong does this thought become that it creates a delusion and he believes himself some noted person and that the destiny of the world hangs on his word. Another common form arises chiefly from fear. The thought is persistently entertained that certain persons are endeavoring to injure him. This idea grows to undue importance until the delusion is entertained that certain individuals, often important and powerful individuals, or it may be relatives who actually love him, are doing him harm. If the case develops far enough, the individual suffering from such a persecution complex may resort to violence to rid himself of his imaginary enemies.

Now an obsession may arise through an induced or a natural mediumship of an extremely negative character, in which some other entity takes control of the individual and causes him to perform acts that he would not do under normal circumstances. Or it may arise through some thought or emotion gaining such power over the individual that it causes him to think and act in an abnormal manner. People who think they are persecuted by unseen influences often merely are paranoiacs who have this as their dominant idea.

Yet it should be realized that paranoia and obsession are merely extreme developments of conditions obtaining in a much less degree in all. Most persons are not so symmetrically developed but that they permit one or more idea to warp their judgment about other things. The paranoiac, however, is so domi-

nated by his pet idea that he can perceive nothing in the external world that interferes with the soundness of this idea. He thus, in this respect, retreats from the world of actuality and substitutes a subjective world of thought in which, in so far as this idea is concerned, things come to pass as he has decided they must. It will, consequently, be seen just how dangerous it is for one to shirk facing facts and the realities of life.

We thus perceive in the fundamentalist who refuses to believe the evidence of his own senses and reason rather than relinquish an emotional religious conception implanted in the plastic impressionable years of his youth, a condition which magnified becomes psychopathic. And taking one step further, we perceive in anyone who temporarily loses self-control through anger, fear, despondency or other emotion, a condition which magnified becomes an obsession.

Knowing, as we do, that disagreeable thoughts, feelings and emotions are destructive to our welfare, we only entertain them against our will. If, therefore, in spite of our resolution to keep them out, in spite of our efforts to eject them, they enter our mental dominion and remain for a time, they are obsessive in character. Recognizing this, we should at all times be alert to perceive their approach and to use our pleasantest memories and plans as forces with which to resist them.

To be sure, discords abound in our environment. Any accomplishment implies the overcoming of difficulties. In fact, the more numerous and the larger the difficulties surmounted the greater the accom-

plishment. Life should be a constant struggle to overcome the limitations of environment. Situations arise daily that to the mentally uncontrolled person cause annoyance, fear, irritation, anger, or other malignant emotions. But by other people similar situations are met not with discordant emotions, but by an energetic desire to meet each situation in a manner yielding the most constructive results.

I have already mentioned the danger of failure to face and recognize facts. When a fact is presented to us if, instead of recognizing its existence even by considering it unexplainable in the light of our present understanding, we substitute for this fact a mental picture of how we had preconceived it, and thus warp the fact to our preconception, we have taken a step, even though a small one, in the direction of paranoid insanity.

But in addition to facts and conditions that are widely at variance with our preconceptions, life holds many situations that are difficult to face, many responsibilities that seem unduly heavy. Yet to flee from these, to shirk facing them, is even more dangerous than warping facts to mental images; for in this direction lies dementia-præcox.

When the individual finds the life of the external world so harsh that it is unbearable he retreats into his own mental images and lives, not in the world of reality, but in a world of imagination. Commonly, in this turning the mind inward, fleeing from the harshness of reality, he reverts to the infantile stage of development. In his infancy he had no responsibilities, was fed, and waited on hand and foot. So

even though at the time of this mental retreat from life he has reached adulthood, when the mind, suffering from a shock in which it could not face some condition, turned inward, he reverts to the mental state of childhood, or even in extreme cases to the foetal stage, in which everything was done for him. In such cases, common to be seen in our insane asylums, the person is unable to feed or dress himself, and must be waited on as an infant. His mind takes little or no recognition of external events. It is absorbed completely with its own phantasies.

I mention paranoia, obsession, and dementia-praecox, not because the ordinary person is in any danger of developing such insanity; but because the ordinary person at times yields in minor ways to tendencies that are detrimental to him, and which in unusual and extreme cases do lead to the asylum.

During the course of nearly everyone's life situations arise in which it seems almost impossible to carry on. Tragedy, sweeping financial loss, sudden sorrow, loss of prestige. Suicide is but another way of retreating from reality. Instead of seeking the shelter of his mother by reverting to the infantile stage of development, the suicide tries to escape from reality by retreating into a state of unconsciousness. He lacks the courage to face life as it is presented to him. But one versed in spiritual alchemy (Course III) is not apt to make such a mistake. For he realizes that the only permanent values he may extract from life are those that pertain to the development of character. He knows that the external circumstances of life, including the death of the body, are of much

less importance than the manner in which he reacts to these events. Whatever conditions arise, he endeavors to meet them courageously as a necessary part of his training for a better life to come.

Courage Must Be Substituted For Apprehension.

—The progressive soul should train itself to the view that no condition can arise in life which it will lack courage to face. There are things that it is much better not to think about, and there are conditions that occasionally arise in some lives that seem terrifying. Yet man should be unafraid, if necessity arises, to face any condition or to think clearly about any situation that exists in the whole domain of nature. Caution is a valuable asset, but fear paralyzes effort. Fear has no part to play, at any time, in the completely constructive life.

While, by using strongly pleasant thoughts to displace them, we can drive unpleasant thoughts and emotions from the mind, there are times when it is imperative to give thought and attention to conditions which tend to give rise to disagreeable emotions. If we are beset by a danger, for instance, it may not be wise to neglect thought of it. A danger, however, even though thought about, need not be feared. In the first place the mind should be trained by a study of spiritual alchemy not to place undue importance on physical welfare. It should be recognized, and this recognition so habitual as not to be obliterated by the presence of danger, that the really important thing about any situation is the manner in which one reacts to it. Then in the second place the attitude

should be taken that a danger is a situation to be met and overcome.

No matter how serious the danger is, it should be accepted as all in the day's work, so to speak, to meet it and to give as good an account of oneself as possible. The energies should become so thoroughly enlisted in devising and carrying out means to meet the danger and triumph over it, that there is no room left in the consciousness for the emotion of fear or thoughts of disaster. In such a case, instead of using the most pleasant thoughts imaginable to oust the disagreeable and disintegrative thoughts and emotions, use is made to the same end of intense concentration to meet and overcome the danger.

Apprehensiveness is quite common with a certain type of person. He confronts various unknown quantities with a feeling of anxiety. When unexpectedly called by telephone he takes down the receiver while wondering if he is going to receive criticism or bad news. When unexpected mail arrives he shrinks from opening it for fear it will contain disagreeable information. Whatever is new or strange or sudden that confronts him he approaches diffidently with the half expectation that it holds something disagreeable or inimical to him.

Such a person is suffering from an anxiety complex, the usual cause of which is well recognized by psychologists, but which need not be considered here. What we are concerned with here is how to overcome it, for it is incompatible with constructive effort. To do this it is well to recognize that such a mental attitude is grounded in no more reality than the child's

fear of the dark. In fact, in its manifestation, it is no more than a survival of the child's fear of the dark transferred to various other unknown quantities.

Whenever, then, there arises a feeling of apprehension when confronted by something whose factors are unknown, one should explain to oneself several times that this is merely the survival of a childish fear, and that it has no normal place in adult life. It should be reflected upon that most unknown situations in the past have offered no great difficulties when finally confronted. Again spiritual alchemy should be considered as indicating the things that are of real importance, and it should be realized, whatever might befall from this or other situations, that it may be made of spiritual value and advantage. And finally it should be affirmed in these words or in others of like import that: I Have Within Me the Power to Meet and Successfully Cope With Any Situation That May Arise In My Life.

The attitude should be so firmly established as to become a habitual mood that there is no shrinking from any situation, real or imaginary, that may arise in life. Instead of there being a dread of unknown factors, there should be supreme confidence that whatever the life attracts can be successfully met and mastered. Such self-confidence is not egotism; for it applies only to problems and situations that the person is required to solve, and does not imply that he can conquer any situation that he might seek. It is self-confidence that quickly proves itself founded on fact. It is the self-confidence of the completely constructive life.

Constructive Action Must Be Substituted For Irritation and Sorrow.—Nor usually can we merely set to one side the many incidents that tend to arouse in us the feeling of irritation. Mistakes are made by ourselves or our associates. Unexpected calls upon our attention and energy are demanded. Our employer is sharp spoken or unreasonable, or our employee is a blunderer and an incompetent. The wife nags or the husband is cross. Our mail goes astray. Someone fails to keep an appointment, or keeps us waiting. Bills are received that already have been paid. Our food has been overcooked or undercooked. Our competitor has gained an advantage. We have been snubbed by an acquaintance. And a thousand and one other things occur that tend to irritate us that we cannot afford completely to ignore, but to which, of necessity, we must devote thought and attention.

Now there is just one way to face any and all such situations as these. First, if we have permitted the feeling of irritation to enter, we should, as explained in detail in lesson No. 151, realize that irritation is the survival of a childish trait. Think about the childishness of the irritation until some conviction is felt, then turn the attention resolutely to the problem.

Come to recognize that every condition that stimulates the feeling of irritation presents a problem to be solved. Irritation is an expression of unwillingness or inability to meet and solve the problem as presented. It indicates weakness, for this situation is a part of life, and as such requires intelligent action.

But instead of intelligent action we waste valuable energy in an emotional display because the problem has arisen.

Yet all must recognize, who give it thought, that the measure of greatness in life, even the measure of any person's ability, is his willingness and capacity for overcoming obstacles. A man is considered strong when he triumphs over adversity, he is considered weak when he permits opposition of no great moment to deflect him from his purpose or to defeat his aim. Irritation at any situation that arises is a tacit admission for the moment that the situation is baffling, that it presents obstacles beyond the size of the individual to cope with successfully. The individual's desire to shirk the responsibility of meeting it expresses itself as emotion.

We should not choose for president of our country, or for other high office, a man who often permitted himself to be irritated or oppressed by the inefficiency of his office staff, or by the mistakes of his subordinates. Instead we would expect him to remedy the conditions which tended to irritate. Unwillingness to meet the numerous small problems that tend to give rise to annoyance clearly shows that the job is too big for the man. It shows that the person is as yet unfit for heavy responsibilities.

There is only one proper way in which to meet every obstacle, every mistake that has been made, every loss that has been sustained, every problem that presents itself. That way is to view the matter coolly, unemotionally, and confidently, with determination to find the best course of action possible under the

circumstances. Instead of expending energy emotionally, energy should be spent constructively. Instead of thinking; Why did that have to happen?; we should think; What is the best thing to do now? The energy should be diverted instantly, first to analyzing and formulating a plan of action, and then to carrying it out. Instead of energy being consumed in destructive irritation and annoyance, it all should move toward correcting the situation.

This applies also to loss and to those events which tend to occasion disappointment and sorrow. Life is not so ordered that we logically can expect to avoid periods when loss will occur. Our friends and relatives, some of them, will die. Mistakes will occur in which we will lose money. Events at times fall out in a manner that is decidedly distasteful, and perhaps imperils life, honor, or financial standing. Yet all time and energy spent grieving, feeling hurt, or in despondency not only tend to attract more misfortune in the future through building discords into the thought-cells within the astral body, but consumes energy that well could be used to remedy conditions.

Not all conditions can be remedied in the sense that a particular loss can be recovered; but at least the energy can be diverted into some channel that will bring, instead of additional loss in the future, some gain. If, after careful reflection, it is decided that a loss is of a nature that it cannot be recovered, or a situation cannot be remedied, it should as quickly and as thoroughly be dismissed from the mind. Pleasant thoughts may be used to drive it out, as already explained. But if there is anything that can be done to

retrieve the loss, or to remedy the mistake, the mind should so concentrate on this constructive effort that there is no room in it for thoughts and emotions concerning the loss or other disagreeable occurrence.

Effort At Self-Improvement Must Be Substituted For Self-Pity.—Still another type of disintegrative thought which is commonly met is self-pity. It manifests in quite a variety of forms; but the most usual are sensitiveness to criticism and slight, or otherwise permitting others to hurt the feelings; the thought that one does not receive fair treatment at the hands of fate, or proper recognition for meritorious actions; and the conviction that one has an unusually hard time in life, a much harder time of it than most people.

Any such manifestation of self-pity, when we stop to analyze it, is seen to be a form of cowardice. It is one way in which the proverbial streak of yellow comes to the surface.

No one has the power to injure our feelings except as we permit it. If another person's actions are unjust, our conviction that he is malicious or misguided should turn immediately to a consideration if it is better to ignore the matter or to take some remedial action. Of course, if we magnify our importance, such megalomania may cause us to believe that fate and persons owe us special considerations, and thus, not getting it, we will constantly feel abused. But viewing things as they are, there should be no room left in the mind for feeling hurt. If the criticism or slight or other treatment is merited and deserved, instead of

shrinking and whimpering about it, we should take our punishment stalwartly.

When we come to recognize, through a study of astrology that the circumstances of our lives are attracted to us because of the activity of thought-cells within our finer forms, and from astrological signatures (Course II) that they are such as at the time we need for education, we are not apt to believe that either fate or people impose upon us without adequate cause. This cause lies within ourselves; and we should, instead of complaining at the injustices of life, and thus perpetuating the discord that attracts injustices, spend our energy altering ourselves (Course IX) so that better fortune will be attracted.

Furthermore, close observation of those persons who continually whine about being mistreated by others, and those who constantly complain of their hard lives, reveals, as a rule, that considering their traits of character as they impress others, they cause others to mistreat them to the extent they are mistreated, or have developed a martyr complex in which they would not be happy unless they could show cause for complaint. And as for their hard condition in life, it would be no harder than that of others if they would work constructively to change it, rather than bewailing their fate.

I could here also mention anger, despondency, discouragement and a number of other disagreeable emotions. But the same method of treatment may be applied to all of these, as to those types of disintegrative thoughts, feelings, and emotions already considered. If attention to their objects is not obligatory,

they should be crowded out by pleasant thoughts. But if they demand attention, the energies should be so concentrated on finding and carrying out the best course of action that there is no room for anything disagreeable.

Proper Nervous Tension Is Important.— Aside from what is disagreeable and what is pleasant, our habitual mood may be lax and negative, or high-strung and spirited. If the nervous tension in which we hold ourselves is too low, we are too greatly influenced by our environment, take on too many conditions, and besides being too greatly influenced in thought and action, the stimuli thus received makes us weary. Under such circumstances our day's work becomes a great effort, and the last hours of it drag slowly. Too much negativeness, too much relaxation of the nervous system, makes small tasks appear large.

On the other hand, if the nervous tension is too high, if the mental reactions are too forceful, there is plenty of energy to start the day, but it is quickly consumed, leaving none for the balance of the day. A too positive attitude toward environment, too much enthusiasm exhibited, uses up the energy and leaves one nervously exhausted.

Somewhere between these two extremes is a mood suitable to each person. It can be learned only by experiment, watching the effect of different tensions. Instead of feeling listless, a person, unless he has decided to relax for rest, should at all times feel just enough tension in his nervous system to make him aware that he is putting conscious and volitional energy into what he is doing. Such physical and

mental attitude actually increases his energy through generating electrical energies of proper frequency by his nervous system. This is the energy that the yogi uses in his magical feats; but which may be generated by the simple means suggested in sufficient quantities to meet successfully the demands of daily life. The slight tension should be felt in every part of the body; but just how great or how little, must be learned by each person for himself.

I have now, at some length, discussed the general methods by which unpleasant thoughts, feelings and emotions may be made to give place to pleasant or constructive thoughts, feelings and emotions. First, a method was proposed by which it might be remembered on each occasion that unpleasant thoughts are not to be entertained under any circumstances. It was then shown how disagreeable thoughts may be put to flight by the use of pleasant thoughts and images. But as some disagreeable situations must receive attention, it was shown that these should be met in a different manner, by concentrating the attention on what should be done, rather than on that which is disagreeable.

For each type of thought, it is true, there is a specific thought antidote. And for each type of disagreeable event, there is also a specific thought treatment. These details are given in Course IX. But for the purpose of tuning in on the completely constructive life, the methods outlined in this lesson are adequate. It only remains, therefore, now that the relation of events to the individual as arousing constructive energies has been defined, to indicate the relation of each of these efforts to the whole.

Not only should all thoughts, feelings and emotions be pleasant, but every action should be considered in the manner in which it affects universal society. Each proposition that arises should be analyzed to see if, in the long run, it is beneficial to others. Every now and then the details of the everyday actions also should come under scrutiny to see if they are constructive in the larger sense. When the actions of the individual are directed to work that assists the Divine Plan of progression, and his thoughts, actions and feelings are habitually pleasant, he has entered into the completely constructive life.

